

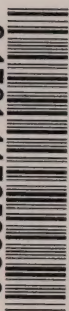
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# Live from *Atlantic Canada...*

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# Live from *Atlantic Canada...*

## THE INFORMATION HIGHWAY

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## Foreword

The Government of Canada is committed to keeping our country competitive in today's knowledge-based economy. Industry Canada's Information Highway programs are a major element of our plan to help Canadians become the most connected people on earth, ready for the jobs and opportunities of the future. The Connecting Canadians initiative has been developed so that people across the country can learn and benefit from new ways of communicating and doing business over the Internet.

Connecting Canadians has something for everyone – families, schools and community groups in rural and urban areas, businesses from small to large, and individuals of all ages. For example, the Digital Collections Program provides young people with an opportunity to learn information technology skills they can apply on the job market, while at the same time developing Canadian content on the Internet for the whole world to see. The Community Access Program (CAP) is helping provide Canadians with affordable public access to the Internet. Under CAP, local schools, libraries and community centres now serve as “on-ramps” to the Information Highway, helping interested Internet users gain access to a whole world of opportunity. By March 2001, CAP will have established 10 000 rural and urban access sites across Canada.

But Connecting Canadians is not just about numbers. It's about people in all parts of Canada looking towards the future, and learning how they can use the Internet and information technology as tools for their own social, economic and cultural development.

This booklet tells the story of people across Atlantic Canada who have experienced for themselves the power of the Internet under two specific initiatives: the Community Access Program and Digital Collections.



To find out more about **Connecting Canadians**, look up our Website at:

<http://www.connect.gc.ca>



To find out more about the **Community Access Program**, check out the national Website at:

<http://cap.unb.ca>



To find out more about the **Digital Collections Program**, get online at:

<http://www.schoolnet.ca/collections/E/>







## Young and not-so-young are 'surfing the Net'

From seniors who took an online course at their local Community Access Centre and then went out and bought home computers, to local businesses that are using the Internet to market their products, to students who are using a chatroom to help their counterparts in Saskatchewan learn French, enthusiasm for surfing the net has rippled through the generations in the small community of Saint-François in northwestern New Brunswick.

"Computers are all around us these days," says Bertin Nadeau, director of the Saint-François library, "even if you work in a factory, it's probably run by a computer. So people are just trying to figure out what's going on."

The Saint-François site was established under the Community Access Program (CAP), an Industry Canada initiative whose objective is to help people living in

communities across Canada acquire and use new communications technologies as a tool for social, cultural and economic development.


The centre in Saint-François, 50 kilometres from Edmundston, was one of the first set up in francophone New Brunswick in 1996, through a partnership between the Ernest Lang elementary school, the village and the public library commission. Now, with four work stations at the library and another 30 Internet-connected computers at the school, this site has a reputation as one of the most dynamic in the province.

"During the first year of operation, we counted 550 different people using the sites," says Nadeau. (The population of Saint-François and surrounding areas is 1500.) The Centre's computers are now tied up 60 per cent of the time.

"When we put on a course for seniors the first year, 15 people took it, and half of them went out and bought computers for their homes," Nadeau says. More than 250 people have taken courses at the centre to date.

Part of the site's success is due to the fact that its staff and volunteers are constantly looking for new ways to use technology. Students set up a correspondence program with a school in Saskatchewan, with French-language exchanges taking place through an online chatroom. For the New Brunswick youth, it's a chance to learn about life in Saskatchewan; for the westerners, a chance to get some help learning French. The Centre also offers summer camps for youth aged six to 14, where participants learn the special HTML language which allows them to create their own web page.

The Centre sponsored an Info-Fair in November of 1998, bringing together business people and educators to show them how the technology works, and, despite a blinding snowstorm, people drove from as far away as Edmundston to be present.

The village of Saint-François now has a website, which it uses to promote its services and those of local businesses. "The Internet offers enormous possibilities for economic development," says Nadeau. "We have an excellent quality of life here, with many things to offer. If people see Saint-François on the Internet, we hope they will come and visit." 

## From e-mail to cyber cheesecake

Working at a Community Access Centre has given a New Brunswick single mother the confidence and courage to get off income assistance, to move away from minimum wage jobs, and to become her own boss.


"It was a very big stepping stone for me," says Angie McNabb of her job at the Sussex Corner Community Access Program (CAP) site, located in the local elementary school. CAP is an initiative of Industry Canada, in partnership with ConnectNBBranché in the province of New Brunswick. CAP's objective is to help Canadians in communities across the country acquire and use new communications technologies as a tool for social, cultural and economic development.

McNabb landed the job at the CAP site in the fall of 1997. Originally a bookkeeper, the 35-year-old mother of two lost her job five years prior. Since then, she had worked at a variety of minimum wage jobs — sometimes two or three at a time to make ends meet — with intermittent periods of employment insurance and social assistance.

The CAP job, she says, "was a really good opportunity for me. I knew next to nothing about the Internet. But after two months, I was teaching people to use e-mail. After three months, I was designing websites."

A cheesecake aficionado who occasionally made cakes for friends and family, McNabb did a little research on the Net and came up with over 400 recipes. When she wanted to build her own webpage, she decided to focus on — what else? — cheesecake, posting a different recipe each week on her site.

When the CAP site job finished in April of 1998, she was determined not to go back to social assistance. She found a part-time job at the town office, and started selling her cheesecakes at the local farmers' market. Angelina's Fine Desserts was born.

"The Access Centre was really the beginning for me," she says. "It gave me the confidence to realize I could do something." Now working at yet another job, McNabb is looking to the future. She would like to find a permanent location for Angelina's Fine Desserts or, better still, start selling her cheesecakes on the Internet. "It's the ideal thing," she says, "because there's no overhead." 





## Internet camp is the cat's meow

An innovative Internet camp designed by a New Brunswick woman is showing children that learning is fun when you do it on computers!

Developed by Elaine Townsend, then coordinator of the St. George Community Access Program (CAP) site at Fundy high school, the camp features links to a variety of interesting websites, live Hallowe'en parties, and even a cat named Spike who returns e-mails.


CAP is an Industry Canada program that helps Canadians in communities across the country access and use new communications technologies for social, cultural and economic development. The CAP site in St. George opened in 1996 through the initiative of the local principal and vice-principal, who wanted students to have access to modern technology.

Townsend was hired and asked to develop an Internet program for ages six to 15 and all skill levels. A photographer with desktop publishing experience, she designed a program of play-based activities centred around such topics as pirates, arts and crafts, web pages, paper dolls, photography and young inventors.

She found websites on these topics, researched them to make sure they were family-oriented, and downloaded free software. She also brought in her cat. "Children, especially young ones, coming into a room full of computers are sometimes nervous, wondering 'what am I doing here?' Spike was a great ice breaker," she said.

Spike was also a way to teach children to use e-mail and to conduct research on the web. He would return their messages with demands of his own: "I need a picture of a fish. Find me one." Townsend also organized a Hallowe'en party, with activities such as virtual pumpkin carving and haunted houses.

She was amazed at how the wealth of information available on the Net inspired the children's own creativity. One six-year-old used the Internet to design a "sippy" cup for his grandmother, an avid tea drinker who, he felt, had to wash her cup too often. "That was one example of a child who would never have had access to the Internet if it wasn't for the CAP site," she says. The St. George CAP site serves not only the town, but also the rest of Charlotte county in southwestern New Brunswick.

Townsend believes that the site has been particularly helpful for children with learning disabilities. The mother of a 12-year-old with dyslexia and a 16-year-old with an attention deficit disorder, she says that children often seem to find it much easier to focus on a computer screen than on the written word. "If a child has a condition that affects his or her ability to focus, they need special attention to get as much as they need from the education system," she says. 

## Farm management tool of the future

The ability to get timely information on a daily basis can make the difference these days between farming profitably and finding another way to make a living.

That's the opinion of Bruce Oliver, policy officer with the New Brunswick Federation of Agriculture, who designed a six-hour course to help farmers and their spouses learn the ins-and-outs of operating a computer and connecting to the Internet.

The course was offered throughout the province at Community Access Centres, set up under Industry Canada's Community Access Program (CAP). CAP is designed to help Canadians in communities across the country acquire and

use new information technologies as a means for social, cultural and economic development. The course, attended by approximately 40 people, was delivered through Industry Canada's provincial partner, ConnectNBBranché.


"The farming community these days is very aware that access to timely information — on weather conditions, fuel costs or commodity prices — is what makes or breaks a farm operation," says Oliver.

Although it's difficult to tell how many farm operations are actually connected to the Internet at home, many people involved in agriculture see the Internet as the farm management tool of the future. The intent of the course was to help the community get ready.

"We designed the course to make people feel comfortable with the technology, to help them develop the confidence that they won't destroy the Internet just by logging on," says Oliver.

At the same time, the Federation is in the process of developing its own website, which will provide links to other agricultural organizations in the province as well as links to important sites such as those providing details on the weather. With their newly acquired skills, farmers can continue to use the Community Access Centre to access the NB Federation site.

"Kids learn about computers in schools these days," says Oliver, "but Community Access Centres are an easy way for farmers to get involved too."

The Federation plans to offer the six-hour course again, and would eventually like to offer training courses on the Net. "We've gone into communities to give courses on pesticide certification," says Oliver. "It's inevitable that we will eventually do the same kind of training over the Internet." 





## Immigrant women expanding their horizons

Being an immigrant can be lonely, especially in parts of the country where immigrant populations are small in number.

An innovative project between ConnectNBBranché and the New Brunswick Women's Intercultural Network is helping women immigrants in the province integrate into their new society while at the same time maintaining their connection to their homeland.

They're getting online through a course offered at Community Access Centres (CACs) across the province. The CACs are set up under Industry Canada's Community Access Program (CAP), the objective of which is to help people in communities across Canada acquire and use


new communications technologies as a way to expand social, cultural and economic development. In the province of New Brunswick, ConnectNBBranché and Industry Canada are partners in the venture.

"This has been a wonderful experience," says Sanna Dhahir, coordinator of the NB Women's Intercultural Network, who took the course herself. "A lot of these women, especially newcomers to Canada, are not acquainted with or perhaps scared of technology. This course has made them feel that they can find their way in their new country."

The eight-hour course teaches the fundamentals of using computers, e-mail and the Internet. For the group of immigrant women, it had two main benefits: encouraging them to feel part of Canadian society, and helping them maintain their contacts in their country of origin.

For the former, they learn how to access such sites as the English as a Second Language homepage, the Citizenship and Immigration Canada homepage as well as job search sites. For the latter, a variety of media sites allow them to connect with newspapers and magazines from around the world, often from their home country and in their first language.

Another advantage is that the women learn to communicate by e-mail. "It's much faster to send an e-mail than to send a fax," says Dhahir, "and it's cheaper than a phone call especially when your family is overseas." At the end of the course, participants have an opportunity to buy a family membership at their local CAC in order to maintain their skills and contacts.

"A lot of immigrant women are home with their children," says Dhahir. "This course has really helped them expand their world." 

## 4-H clubs connect

Traditionally based in rural areas of Canada, 4-H clubs have helped generations of youth learn a variety of skills and at the same time added a new dimension to country living.

These days, 4-H is no longer strictly farm-related – the program for youth aged nine to 21 now has dozens of other types of projects. It's also begun to help its members connect in the most modern way possible – through the Internet.


Hundreds of 4-H members in New Brunswick have had a chance to learn Internet skills without leaving their home communities. In partnership with Industry Canada, ConnectNBBranché is a sponsor of the Community Access Program (CAP), a federal initiative to help Canadians

across the country access and use new communications technology as a tool for social, cultural and economic development.

Janice Anderson, who is the Canadian 4-H representative for the province of NB, learned about the program through a presentation given by Industry Canada in Montreal. She brought the idea home to Douglas (population 1000), a bedroom community of Fredericton, and shortly afterwards a committee was formed to apply for a site locally. Established in the summer of 1997, the Douglas Community Access Centre now has eight computers.

"As 4-H members, we're always saying that we don't have enough information, we need to communicate more with people in other clubs," says Anderson. "I saw the Internet as one way to do that."

Anderson negotiated an agreement with ConnectNBBranché to allow members of the 44 4-H clubs in the province to take a 12-hour basic online course. Available at CAP sites throughout the province (numbering almost 200), the course taught members a variety of skills at their own pace. "It was an advantage not to have to travel away from our communities to get an Internet course," says Anderson.

Since the course finished, many 4-H members as well as their leaders continue to use the sites, to conduct research and send e-mails. "We're like every other volunteer group, always fundraising, always looking for new ideas. Now we can communicate with our council office and other clubs across the country," Anderson says. "I think the thing we liked the most was the idea that it was modern." 





## Bright future for young Internet whiz

If there's a common thread in Chris Wells' life, it's computers and the Internet. The 22-year-old native of St. Anthony found a summer job on the Internet. The job was to teach people about computers and the Internet. As an offshoot, he started his own company, constructing websites. And in his spare time, he surfs the web to – what else? – “read about computer stuff.”

Now enrolled in a programmer analyst course at the College of the North Atlantic in St. John's, Wells is fascinated with Internet possibilities. “You really learn about what's going on in the world,” he says.

In the spring of 1998, Wells submitted his résumé to the National Graduate Register, an Industry Canada-led database that matches employers' needs with the skills of


young job seekers. The job was in Wells' hometown on the Great Northern Peninsula, managing a local site under the Community Access Program (CAP), another Industry Canada initiative.

Set up in the town's public library, the St. Anthony CAP site has six Internet-connected computers. CAP is a program that helps Canadians living in communities across the country learn to use new communications technologies for social, cultural and economic development.

As a CAP co-ordinator, Wells spent the summer of 1998 teaching local residents how to use the Internet. “A lot of parents, where their children are learning computers in school, want to keep up with it. And seniors love the Internet for sending e-mails to their grandchildren all over Canada,” he says.

Wells also constructed a website for the town, and promoted the idea with local businesses. Because of the demand, he started his own company, Compuweb Technologies, to construct websites for companies in St. Anthony and surrounding areas.

“In St. Anthony, we get a lot of tourists,” he says. “So now potential visitors can find out on the Internet what's available in terms of accommodations and restaurants. And they can look at photos to see what St. Anthony looks like.” In fact, the town of St. Anthony (population 3200) now has two websites where people can even view icebergs.

Although his company is presently on hold because he's back at school, Wells definitely sees a long-term future for himself in computer technology. “I feel very confident in what I'm doing, that it will land me a job, hopefully here in my home province,” he says. “I would like every opportunity to promote St. Anthony and the rest of Newfoundland to the world. We have a lot to offer.” 

## Labradorians open to the world

To people of the Labrador Straits region, being connected to the Internet offers many opportunities that help expand their horizons beyond their geographical location – from resources for students and teachers, to information on health issues, to potential for economic development and even a daily newspaper.

So says Sheila Downer, Information Technology Development Officer with the Labrador IT Initiative, who has been working to get a Community Access Program (CAP) site set up on this 250-kilometre stretch of highway on the Strait of Belle Isle, which connects eight communities between l'Anse-au-Clair near the Quebec border to Red Bay where the road ends. The objective of the Industry Canada program is to help Canadians in communities across the country acquire and use new

communications technologies as a means of social, cultural and economic development.


“The Internet is certainly important for urban communities,” says Downer, “but it's even more so for rural areas like Labrador. From the point of view of economic development, it's key.”

The Labrador Straits area was approved as a CAP site and equipment bought. The only stumbling block was that users would have to pay 45 cents per minute to surf the Net, to cover long-distance charges. Local businesses believed it was so important to provide access that they joined with the Straits economic development group to get a local Internet node installed that eliminates long-distance charges. “It's the only way to open up businesses here to the global marketplace,” says Downer.

“For example, we have craft producers here who depend on summer tourists and local residents to sell their products. With a website, you can sell your product anywhere in the world,” she says. Another advantage of the Internet in this part of the country, where

communities often have resident nurses but not doctors, is that people can find information on health issues, like diabetes and Alzheimer's disease, and even hook up with an online support group.

“In terms of education, we have a small library here and it's only open 10 hours a week,” says Downer. “So for teachers, the Internet is an excellent way to bring new information into the classroom.” With the Internet, people can also read national newspapers – which are not delivered into the area – on a daily basis.

CAP computers will eventually be set up in libraries and schools in seven communities. (Red Bay, because of distance, has applied for its own CAP site.) The plan is to develop a virtual community channel, where local information could be posted. The Straits area does not have a newspaper or radio station. “We have no way to disseminate local information,” says Downer. “We want the CAP sites to play that role.” 





## The power of the Internet

Three years ago, St. Joseph's school in Ferryland had one computer — an old Commodore 64. Today, in partnership with Baltimore high school, which is located in the same complex, St. Joseph's has a technology lab with 25 computers, all connected to the Internet.

The newly opened Community Education Centre, also located in the school, has another eight computers with Internet access.

Thanks to Industry Canada's Community Access Program (CAP), students and local residents are being plugged into the world in a way that has never happened before in the Ferryland District, home to 11 communities and a population of 4500. No one expected it to be so easy in rural Newfoundland, where even if a person does have a home computer, in some areas long-distance charges must still be paid to use the Internet.

CAP, a program run by Industry Canada, allows Canadians in communities to access new technologies as a tool for social, cultural and economic development.

The CAP site in Ferryland, which opened in June 1998, uses direct PC and Helius software to bring the Internet to its clients.


People come to the Ferryland CAP site for a variety of reasons, says St. Joseph's principal Adrian Brennan. Some want to access their e-mail accounts, take courses through distance education, do job searches, or take advantage of the vast amount of information for research purposes in health, science, history and general interest areas.

Businesses also use the site to conduct research and to promote local economic development. Recently, the CAP site hired two information technology facilitators (through the Fisheries Restructuring and Adjustment Measures Program) to promote local businesses by constructing websites. One business that has already benefitted is the Downs Inn, a Ferryland bed and breakfast operation. At the request of the Provincial Information and Library Resources Board, owner Aidan Costello agreed to provide housing for a student who was employed through the CANAL (Community Access Newfoundland and Labrador) Program in the summer of 1998.

In exchange, the student created a website to promote Costello's business. "Before the creation of the website for the Downs Inn, the only inexpensive method of advertising was through the provincial tour guide and highway signs. Even then, there are limits to the amount of information you can provide to potential customers about your business," he says. Now people from around the world can use his website to look at his rooms, and check out the local scenery.

Costello first experienced the Internet a few years ago in St. John's. "Before the CAP site," he says, "the Internet was considered a luxury in Ferryland."

The Ferryland CAP site has provided the infrastructure for other initiatives. The Community Education Centre, a life-long learning centre supported by Human Resources Development Canada, is located in the same building and uses CAP resources. The CAP site is also developing a partnership with a local private post-secondary school, Keyin Technical College, which will offer courses through CAP.

"The big advantage of having the CAP site in the school," says Adrian Brennan, "is that you're getting at the young people, showing them how to use technology for educational purposes. Once that happens, they teach their parents." 

## A new crosswalk at the Torbay library

The Community Access Program (CAP) in Torbay has breathed new life into the local library. "It's just been incredible," says Cathy Marsh, chairperson of the Torbay Local Library Board and one of the people who was instrumental in helping the community get connected to the Internet. Industry Canada's Community Access Program helps people in communities across the country to acquire and use communications technology as a tool for social, cultural and economic development.

In Torbay, it all started in 1995, when a 10-year-old came into the library wanting to use the Internet. At the time, neither the library nor the local elementary and

secondary schools, which serve surrounding communities of Flatrock, Bauline and Pouch Cove (for a total population of 7300 combined with Torbay), had computers.

"So our librarian had to refer this child to St. John's," says Marsh, a 15-minute drive away. That's when Marsh and her group began the work that led to the official opening of the CAP site in August 1997. They now have four computers.


Since then, there have been constant line-ups. "It was overwhelming," says Marsh. "The town manager would arrive at 8:30 in the morning to open the town hall, and people would be there already, waiting to get into the library which doesn't open until 10:30."

After a while, says Marsh, "people got a bit wiser and phoned ahead to reserve a computer." A spin-off for the library has been that while people are there with their children, waiting to use a computer, they browse through the books. Book withdrawals have more than doubled since the CAP site opened. The provincial transportation

department has also had to install a crosswalk because of the increased traffic outside the library.

The CAP site has drawn different people to the library for different reasons. Recently, an elderly couple asked the librarian to help them find information on Alzheimer's disease. "Especially since we don't have a public transportation system," says Marsh. "It's been terrific for seniors who can't just jump in a car and drive to St. John's."

The local Women's Institute uses the Internet to find ideas for crafts and fund-raising. The town manager and staff research municipal issues. And the Torbay Fire Department recently sold a surplus fire truck - over the Internet.

"Public libraries have always been fairly limited in the information that we have in the library, because of funds," says Marsh. "There's no comparison now with the kind of information you can get on the Internet." 





## Bringing Newfoundland art to the world

Don't have the time or money to visit the Art Gallery of Newfoundland and Labrador in St. John's? Now you can be there — virtually — with a simple click of a mouse.

Thanks to Industry Canada's Digital Collections program, the permanent collection of the gallery is on display on the Internet. Organized in a way that simulates the actual experience of being there, the site lets you click your way from room to room, see each entire wall, then view a close-up of each individual painting.

The exhibition, called *Shaped by the Sea*, explores how the Newfoundland and Labrador environment and culture have been influenced by the ocean. Some images

are compelling commentaries on the current state of the fishing industry; others are reminders of by-gone days.


"It's been a very exciting experience for us in more ways than one," says Vincent Walsh, coordinator for the Newfoundland-Labrador Heritage Web Project which received funding to digitize the Art Gallery's collection under the program.

Aside from the fact that many people across Newfoundland and Labrador would never have a chance to visit the art gallery, a person walking into the building in St. John's would only see five percent of the permanent collection at any one time. On the Net, the major portion of the collection is available for viewing.

The intent of the Digital Collections program is to give young people technology-related experience while at the same time developing Canadian content for the Internet. "The majority of people we've hired so far have gotten jobs elsewhere," says Walsh.

"I know the emphasis is on technology," he continues, "but we needed other skills as well, like writing. One of our writers now has a full-time job with a newspaper. So there's really been a lot of trickle-down benefits."

The artists themselves have been delighted with the exposure they receive by having their work on the Internet. Teachers and students around the province have also been using the site. "Of course art is taught in schools. Now there's a whole body of Newfoundland artwork that is available on the Internet," says Walsh.

The Heritage Web Project is now working on its third project under Digital Collections. "This has been a very rewarding experience," says Walsh. "We try not to get too excited but sometimes it is difficult not to when we see how fruitful these projects have been." 

## A real-life learning experience in the classroom

In the field of education, it's not always easy to come up with a real life learning situation.

That's why Ron Fagan and his students at Holy Redeemer School in Spaniard's Bay, Newfoundland felt fortunate when they had a chance to work on a project for the Digital Collections program. An initiative of Industry Canada, the intent of the program is to give young people technology-related work experience while at the same time increasing Canadian content on the Internet.


Fagan and about 50 grade nine students at the K-9 school on the Avalon Peninsula near St. John's digitized two of the six Books of Remembrance, which contain the

names of Canadians who fought and died in wars. The six books cover Newfoundland, South Africa/Nile, the Merchant Navy, the Korean War, and the First and Second World Wars. The Spaniard's Bay group digitized the Newfoundland and First World War books.

"This was a terrific learning experience," says Fagan, technology resource teacher and project manager. "It was also certainly of great historical and cultural significance for Newfoundland and Labrador." The Newfoundland Book commemorates all those from the province who died at war.

The students learned a variety of skills, from scanning pages (a total of 800!) to converting them into special HTML files so they could be put on the Internet. They also put the names of people listed in the Books into a searchable list, so that users can find a particular name they are looking for.

The project was launched in St. John's in June of 1996, where one of the students, Melissa Cormier, told the assembled group about the benefits of the project from her perspective. Not only was it a valuable learning experience for the students, related Cormier, but the school also gained new state-of-the-art equipment for the computer lab as a result. "Knowing how to use a computer is not just an asset in today's job market, it's a must!" she said.

Since then, the school has continued to make information technology a priority. All teachers and almost every student, including those in kindergarten, now have their own e-mail account. "Having e-mail and using the Internet has become as commonplace for these children as hearing a telephone dial tone," says Fagan. 



## Cape Breton history online

Two Cape Bretoners have gained some much-needed work experience, thanks to Industry Canada's Digital Collections program, and as a result have picked up not one but two awards!

Sean Coyle, 28, and Shawn Green, 25, are partners in Virtual Media Productions (VMP) Ltd., a Sydney-based multimedia technology company which won "best educational, training and informational website" at the Atlantic Digital Media Festival in Baddeck, NS in the fall of 1998.

The distinction was awarded for a project entitled "History of Coal-mining in Cape Breton" which was produced by the company under the Digital Collections program. The objective of the program is to give young

Canadians entrepreneurial and technology-based job experience while at the same time increasing Canadian content on the Internet.

And to top it all off, the two men were later chosen "Entrepreneurs of the Year" by the Sydney Board of Trade.


Not bad for Coyle, who graduated a few years ago from Acadia University in Wolfville with a Bachelor of Arts in political science and French which, he found, wasn't enough to help him land a job. So he enrolled in the multimedia technology course at McKenzie College in Sydney, where he met and later teamed up with Shawn Green to form a company.

They found the going tough at first. Not only were there a lot of companies offering the same service but there was little work around. "Most companies didn't know much about the Internet and so they weren't interested in having a website," says Coyle.

What helped them turn the corner was the Digital Collections program. "We had never worked on a website that large, about 50 pages," says Coyle. "We knew we could do it, but we had never had the chance." The two men came up with an interesting local topic – the history of coal-mining in Cape Breton – and the rest, as they say, is history.

The project employed five people on and off over a period of a year. The company now has eight employees.

"The biggest thing it allowed us to do was create something totally original, instead of working for a client who was telling us what to do. We decided on the topic and had creative control. That was a real big plus," says Coyle. The project allowed the men to show what they could do.

"It's hard to get experience working on the bigger projects if you've never done it," says Coyle. Another spin-off from the experience – the company has just landed a contract to create an even bigger website, this time for Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation! 

## Young Mi'kmaq set on the road to work

A young Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq has taken a step into the world of work, thanks to Industry Canada's Digital Collections program. "I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't worked on that project," says Michael Sack, 27, who is now a web assistant with NSLinks in the provincial Department of Education.


The project he's referring to is the Mi'kmaq Portraits Collection, 660 historic photos and illustrations which were collected by the Nova Scotia Museum, digitized under Digital Collections and posted on the Internet in 1997. Sack worked with Heather MacLeod and Gabriel Logan-Wright on the project, and says it was his first big job.

The intent of the Digital Collections program is to give young people technology-based experience in the labour market while at the same time creating Canadian content for the Internet. "I know part of Industry Canada's hope is that the program will be a stepping stone for young people," says museum curator of archeology David Christianson, who managed the project, "but in this case it really happened. All three project participants have gone on to bigger and better jobs."

Museum ethnologist Dr. Ruth Whitehead had collected the photos over a 20-year period, Christianson explains, and the museum was looking for a way to make the material available to a larger audience. A book wasn't feasible because of the large number of images in the collection. Then the museum learned about the Industry Canada program.

It was ideal, says Christianson. People can now view the collection online, and even request copies of photos. The site has had 11 000 visitors to date, and dozens of e-mails. "And the schools are using it, which is what we wanted, so we're very pleased," he says. The collection has, in fact, become interactive; members of the Mi'kmaq community have sent e-mails to identify photos of people whose names were previously unknown to museum staff.

Many of the photos are family snapshots; others are of Mi'kmaq rock carvings in Kejimikujik Park which date from the 1700s. The collection is available in English with a French introduction, and a Mi'kmaq one is planned.

"For me, as a Mi'kmaq, I was really proud of the project we did," says Michael Sack. Not only that, but he was hired immediately afterward on another museum project before accepting his present job with the Department of Education. 





## Halifax kids connect to the Internet

Tracey Jones has worked in the library system in Nova Scotia for 20 years. But she's never seen so many children using the library she works in since a Community Access Program (CAP) site was set up in the summer of 1998.

Jones is manager of the Halifax North Memorial Public Library, in the north end of Halifax, where a CAP site with four Internet-connected computers is located. It has averaged a thousand bookings a month, and its clients are primarily low-income people, including a lot of kids who otherwise may not have a chance to "surf the Net."


CAP is an Industry Canada program that helps Canadians in communities across the country learn to use communications technologies for social, cultural and economic development. The one in Halifax's north end was set up through the efforts of community groups such as the African Canadian Employment Clinic, the Northend Community Health Centre, the Northend Senior Women's Group and the library itself.

People saw the program as a way to make technology accessible, in particular to inner-city kids. "Halifax schools are starting to get computers now," says Jones, "but the inner-city schools are still not up-to-scratch."

The demographics of north end Halifax have changed in the past 20 years, says Jones. There are fewer Black residents (although they still represent roughly half the population) and more immigrants from Vietnam, China and Latin America. Ten percent of the population is of

Aboriginal heritage. "The CAP site has been really good for people trying to learn a second language," she says.

Before the doors opened, a lot of research was done to identify websites of particular interest to the local residents. "The kids really get into it," says Jones. "They use the Internet for school projects, a lot of e-mail, and even listening to music." The CAP site is also used to teach adult literacy.

"I think what it's meant for people here is that they're now part of the bigger world that everyone's talking about, the whole Internet world, that they didn't have an opportunity to be part of before," says Jones. 

## Rural community goes online

Want to check out the menu at Hulo's Pit-Stop Pizzeria in Tatamagouche? Plan to be passing through and want to find out if the town has a drug store?

Just check out this rural community's website, and you'll see not only a list of almost every business in the town and surrounding area, but even see the staff at Hulo's cutting pizza.

The community website was developed with the assistance of Industry Canada's Community Access Program (CAP), the objective of which is to help Canadians in communities across the country acquire and use new communications technologies as a tool for social, cultural and economic development.

The CAP site in Tatamagouche is decentralized. Two CAP computers at the local video store allow youth 12-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week access to the Internet. CAP funding enabled the community to buy special software for visually impaired people, installed at the local


library. Five CAP computers at the North Colchester high school provide volunteer training to students as well as the community's adult population. There is also a business service centre on Main Street, with two CAP computers, where would-be entrepreneurs can share space and services.

CAP is just one element in a much larger project in the area, which has been taking an integrated approach to helping the community go online. "Tatamagouche, the smart rural community," is a unique demonstration project, a joint initiative of the Colchester Regional Development Agency and Greater Tatamagouche (population 4000) funded under the Canada-Nova Scotia COOPERATION Agreement on Economic Diversification.

The goal of the project, says Business Development Analyst Debra Hoffos, "is to maximize the advantages of emerging computer-based communications technologies to develop and sustain a vibrant economy." The original focus has been to help people and businesses feel comfortable with computers and the Internet through a variety of projects and programs.

At Christmas, webmasters used robotic technology to broadcast the Christmas concert at the local elementary school. "People were phoning their relatives in other parts of the country to say, 'your grandchild is going to be on the web,'" says Hoffos. The effect is that the Internet is becoming a topic of conversation in shops and restaurants. "People are approaching us to see if they can be on the web," says Hoffos. "It used to be the other way around."

The project also supervised an Industry Canada Digital Collections project to digitize a collection of photos of Anna Swan, a famous giantess from the area. The purpose of the Digital Collections program is to give young people technology-related experience while at the same time preparing Canadian content for the Internet. "It was a good initiative to get community groups working together," says Hoffos.

The next phase of the project, says Hoffos, is "to go global, to market the area to the outside world and hopefully bring businesses to Tatamagouche, using communications technology to conduct business anywhere in the world from a rural community." 



## The 'trojan horse' of community economic development

The Community Access Program (CAP) has been many things to many people throughout Atlantic Canada. In the Strait of Canso area of Nova Scotia, CAP sites have become the active ingredient – the “Trojan horse” in the words of people there – for engaging communities in exploring the potential of information technology in community economic development. The sites are part of the infrastructure – a place for people to learn skills, a meeting place for the community to talk about opportunities, says Robert Proctor enthusiastically.

Proctor is the Technology and Program Manager of the Strait East Nova Community Enterprise Network


(SENCEN), a non-profit group funded under the Canada-Nova Scotia COOPERATION Agreement on Economic Diversification.

In a unique partnership, SENCEN, the Strait Regional School Board and three regional development authorities have joined forces with Industry Canada to pursue the federal government’s “Connecting Canadians” agenda. The goal of Connecting Canadians is to help Canadians become the most connected people on earth by the year 2000, in order to benefit from jobs and opportunities of an increasingly knowledge-based economy.

SENCEN has been working throughout the Strait region (which includes four rural counties including parts of Cape Breton, with a population of roughly 65 000) to connect people and technology. There are now 36 CAP sites funded through Industry Canada and another 34 access points. Fifty-three communities and all schools in the area are connected to the Internet.

“Our goal is to bring people and technology together to build enterprising communities,” says Proctor. One of SENCEN’s objectives is to bring back the young people who have moved away from the community, and show them that there are ways to use information technology to make a living in rural areas.

In the summer of 1998, 88 young people returned to the region to work at CAP sites. In 1999, through a partnership with Human Resources Development Canada, 14 young people will work with SENCEN to explore ways to use technology for community economic development. Not only will these people acquire some vital work experience but hopefully they will move on to other jobs. “It’s easier to find employment when you’re employed,” says Proctor.

“There may be few jobs here,” he continues, “but there is a lot of work. I see CAP sites as a place where people can get together, share their skills, and talk about new ventures.” 

## Connecting at home

The Parrsboro Community Access Program (CAP) site has been so popular that it’s beginning to put itself out of business, at least in the larger community.

The 100 or so members of the Parrsboro Internet Access Society have enjoyed surfing the web so much that many of them have now bought home computers.

“We used to average 30 people a night at the CAP site,” says Parrsboro elementary school vice-principal Jack Hill. “Our numbers have dropped because people are getting connected at home.”


Hill has been the driving force behind getting both the local elementary and secondary schools (for a total student population of 550) connected to the Net. In the early 1990s, with the help of Human Resources Development Canada, he set up a Local Area Network (LAN) system in the schools, which are next door to each other, with one server and 50 computers.

When Industry Canada initiated the Community Access Program, designed to help Canadians in communities across Canada learn about new communications technology as a means to foster social, cultural and economic development, the Parrsboro system was upgraded. A new server switching unit and fibre optics between the two buildings were added, as were another 50 computer workstations.

The elementary school has one computer laboratory plus two computers per classroom. The high school has two laboratories plus a computer per classroom. All are connected to the Internet.

The Parrsboro Internet Access Society was set up by people in the community to use the computers at the CAP site outside of school hours. One service offered to members is community dial-up, which allows people to use the school’s server from their homes.

That attendance may now be dropping off is a measure of the CAP site’s success. People are making the Internet a permanent part of their home life. But the site is not going unused. The computers are in constant use by students during the school year. In the summer, computer sports camps are held. And tourists can even drop in to the site to check their e-mail while they’re on holiday.

“We just felt that it was something we had to do,” says Hill. “The Internet is not a luxury, it’s a necessity.” 





## Bringing history and technology together


A young Prince Edward Island native has landed back in the classroom, after an experience working on Industry Canada's Digital Collections program gave him the urge to start his own business.

Nicholas Burka, 20, of York Point near Charlottetown, was team leader and graphic designer on a project to digitize photos and images of the Charlottetown Conference of 1864, an event which led to the birth of the Canadian federation. The Digital Collections program gives young people technology-related experience while at the

same time increasing Canadian content on the Internet. "Working with the team and learning to manage people was certainly a great experience for me," says Burka, who is now studying business administration at the University of PEI. "It was really the Digital Collections program that got me thinking about my own business."

The Charlottetown Conference collection was the second Digital Collections project that Burka worked on. He was hired as team leader for the second one, in fact, because of having worked on an earlier collection called Jack Turner's War. Turner was a young recruit from PEI who became renowned on the Island for photographs he took of his experiences during World War II.

Although he knew that he wanted to be a graphic designer, Burka went into the first project with few Internet skills. "That first project really introduced me to all aspects of website construction and graphic design specifically for the Internet. The project was a great learning experience," he says.

Becoming team leader on the second project allowed him to share his skills with other team members. It also gave him experience working with clients, such as people at the PEI Archives, the Charlottetown Capital Commission and the local library, where many of the photos for the collection were found. "The Charlottetown Conference is a very important event in PEI's and Canada's history," he says, "I love bringing history and modern technology together to tell the story in a new way." 

## Age no obstacle for entrepreneur

At a time when many people would be looking to retire, Gilles Painchaud launched a new career. The 54-year-old man from Wellington has found a partner half his age, and started a new company called Progressive Insights Inc.

The company designs and builds websites, is moving into software development, and aims to soon be into electronic commerce. For Painchaud, it's an exciting new chapter in his life, one where the possibilities are unlimited. "This technology really opens you up to the world. The sky's the limit," he says enthusiastically.


Retired from the military after 28 years, Painchaud had managed the local Legion for almost a decade. He was looking for a change when he was approached by the Wellington Community Access Program (CAP) to work on a Digital Collections project for Veterans Affairs Canada.

CAP is an Industry Canada initiative that helps Canadians in communities throughout Canada develop computer skills in order to foster social, cultural and economic growth. CAP sites are equipped with Internet-connected computers for use by local citizens.

The CAP site in Wellington is located in the offices of the Island Advanced Training and Technology Centre, an initiative of the Société éducative de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard and the region's Acadian economic development association, whose objective is to foster information technology businesses on the Island.

An electronic technician by training, Painchaud didn't take long to catch on to the new technology. He believes that he might have arrived where he is today anyway, although working through CAP made everything easier. "The CAP project was where it all started," he says. "They gave us the training, the tools to work with, and an actual project to work on."

Now that he and partner Daniel Arsenault have established a private company with offices located in the same building as the CAP site, they still make use of its resources to upgrade their skills and learn about new software. Progressive Insights Inc. already has four employees, with hopes of hiring more as the business develops.

Painchaud believes that with the Internet, his company can compete anywhere and with anyone. With e-commerce, for example, they will be able to market Island crafts directly to customers in Japan. "We have a tendency to think our only market is the Island," he says, "but the spectrum is a lot wider than that. It just depends on how far and fast you want to push it." 



## Helping business clients keep up with technology

In the rush to keep up with new information technologies, many people and businesses need to stop to ponder the question: what can technology do for me?

That's the view of Angie Cormier, a self-employed woman from Cape Egmont in the Acadian region of PEI, who has recently carved out a role for herself as intermediary between the 'techies' and her clients. "I'm not a 'techie,'" she says, "but I'm constantly keeping up with what's going on. People need to know what this new technology can do for them, how it can transform their organization."

Cormier has been able to do so because of the Community Access Program (CAP) site in Wellington, 10 minutes from her home. CAP is an Industry Canada

program which helps people in communities across Canada acquire and use new communications technologies as a means for increasing social, cultural and economic development.

A 36-year-old Cajun from Louisiana, Cormier came to Moncton, New Brunswick 15 years ago to learn French, and ended up settling on PEI. An adult educator and communications specialist, she launched her own company, ACA Consultants, working mainly with small businesses and non-profit groups. It went on the back burner three years ago when she got a job at Holland College in Charlottetown teaching business management.


It was then that she began to see the IT revolution approaching. "The technology movement was developing at a fantastic rate," she says, "but a lot of people were getting left behind. There's a growing gap between the 'knows' and the 'know-nots.'"

That's when she decided to improve her own skills in order to help her clients. She enrolled in a six-week night course at the CAP site, learning such basic production skills as graphics and webpage design. She later signed up

for a nine-month course in new education technology, also offered at the CAP site.

For Cormier, the CAP site has been a necessary technical infrastructure, not available elsewhere, to allow her to upgrade her skills. "It's very small and very community-based. You can just walk in and start using the equipment. It's a virtual world!" she says. It has also provided a stimulating, supportive, 'hands-on' environment that helped her develop her thinking on the link between information technology, education and business.

As a result, Cormier feels, she can be more helpful to her clients while at the same time "growing her company." She has added a branch, ACA Digital Knowledge, which specializes in helping small businesses take advantage of information technology.

CAP sites, she says, "put it right out there for the public. It can be an eye-opener for community members to see what technology can bring them, and what they can bring to this whole wave of new technologies." 

## Bringing the world to Vernon River

The Vernon River Community Access Project is a splendid example of how far a collective vision can take a school and, indeed, a community.

The project started in 1997 because a group of teachers at the Vernon River Consolidated School (VRCS), roughly 30 kilometres east of Charlottetown, thought it important for their students to learn about computers. "Our teachers are 100 percent committed to having computers and the Internet integrated into the curriculum," says Mike Oulton, a junior high school teacher who has been one of the driving forces behind the project.

In doing some research, teachers came across information on Industry Canada's Community Access Program (CAP), a program that helps Canadians in communities across the country take advantage of communications technologies as a tool for social, cultural and economic development. The teachers applied for assistance, and quickly went about equipping their chosen CAP site, located in the school. The site has almost 30 computers.


"One of the strengths of the program here is that it is totally intertwined with the school," says Oulton. Children have access to the site during the day for school projects. ("Some of my junior high kids teach me more than I teach them," jokes Oulton.) Teachers use it to develop their own computer skills. And members of the community come in during the evening to take courses on various software packages, the Internet, and website development.

The Vernon River CAP site now has its own website, which is over 100 pages long. Much of the information it contains was developed initially as part of school projects.

For example, "a day in the life of VRCS, as seen by teachers," was produced by student teachers at the school. The "Canadian GeoAccess Project" is under construction by the grade nine students.

And a newsletter started by the grade eight group has been so popular that it is now a regular feature of school life, with contributions from the community. In fact, many people who have used the CAP site have now bought home computers, partly so they can access the newsletter on a regular basis.

Originally developed to bring computers to students, the Vernon River CAP site is now bringing the world to the Vernon River community. People see the newsletter, for example, as an opportunity to promote community development.

"When you look at society today, computers are all around us," says Mike Oulton. "The CAP program was really an opportunity for the community of Vernon River to join in." 





## Turning under-employment into self-employment

The Community Access Program (CAP) in Morell has opened the door for two PEI women to launch their own business constructing websites. "It's been an invaluable tool," says Ann Drake who, with partner Lori Johnston, started Digital by Design using computer skills both learned under the program.

A graduate of the University of New Brunswick, Drake, 25, spent a year in a minimum-wage sales job before being hired by a PEI company that had a contract under the Digital Collections program. An initiative of Industry Canada, the intent of the program is to provide young people with multimedia work experience while at the same time increasing Canadian content on the Internet.


Johnston, also 25, was hired at the same time. The job was to digitize Canadian military medals for Veterans Affairs Canada. "We really honed our skills on the program," says Drake who describes herself as "almost computer illiterate" before she got the job.

The women did some of the work at the Morell Region Community Learning Centre, the CAP location, which not only offers training programs but also makes hardware and software available to the community for a variety of uses. The objective of CAP is to help Canadians in communities across the country take advantage of new communications technology. "If it hadn't been for CAP," says Drake, "we wouldn't have had the infrastructure to do it."

During the course of the project, the two women decided to launch their own business in website development and Internet research. Both also found part-

time jobs using their skills. Drake helped to set up a Community Resource Centre in Montague, and Johnston in St. Theresa's. Drake is also now coordinating another Digital Collections project on PEI shipwrecks.

One advantage of using CAP centres is that a person can build up a business without first making a major investment in equipment. "The Community Access Program is a great way for people in a small community like Morell to have access to computers and the Internet," says Johnston.

"Developing these digitized collections has really increased our profile. It's given us an edge to go out and find other work," she says. While the women are not sure what the future holds for their company – since a lot of people are now offering the same service – both Johnston and Drake say that the experience has taught them the fundamentals of managing a small business, something both agree will continue to open doors for them in the future. 

## The cutting edge of IT

From not knowing how to turn on a computer a couple of years ago when he left a business administration course at the Université de Moncton, 24-year-old Jocelyn Arseneault of Wellington is now a business owner.

In fact, his company, Netnovations Enterprises Inc., is at the forefront of new product development. Integrating database technology with the Internet, Arseneault has come up with an online nation-wide Internet apartment rental guide which he expects to launch in 1999.

The young entrepreneur owes at least part of his success to the Community Access Program (CAP) site in Wellington, in the Acadian region of PEI, where he first


began to hone his skills in information technology. CAP is an Industry Canada program whose objective is to help Canadians in communities across Canada acquire and use new communications technologies as a tool for social, cultural and economic development.

After two years at the University of PEI in Charlottetown and another two in Moncton, Arseneault walked into the CAP site in Wellington with the idea of starting his own business already in the back of his mind. He took a few basic courses in website construction and design, and later some advanced Internet programming courses.

"Database interaction with the Internet was totally new to me," he says. "The CAP site offered courses on different software programs and even brought in experts from outside the province."

Because of his experience, he landed a contract under the Digital Collections program, another Industry Canada initiative that gives young people technology-related experience while also creating Canadian content for the Internet. Arseneault helped digitize a collection of Victoria Cross recipients from World War I.

He launched his company in the fall of 1997 and to date is still the only employee, although he has had a number of contracts for which he has hired subcontractors. As soon as his new product is launched, he says, the company will need a staff of five.

"For sure the CAP site helped me a lot," he says. "It's really where I got my start." 









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